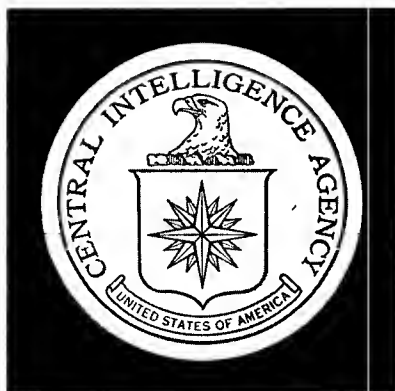


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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

Top Secret

15 November 1966

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Information as of 1600
15 November 1966

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HIGHLIGHTS

Five US helicopters have been lost to enemy ground fire in South Vietnam--three in Tay Ninh Province and two in Quang Nam. In the ground fighting in Tay Ninh Province, allied forces continue to uncover large stores of food and ammunition, although enemy units remain elusive.

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I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Five American helicopters have been shot down by enemy ground fire in Tay Ninh and Quang Nam provinces (Paras. 1-2). Allied forces in Operation AT-TLEBORO continue to sweep Tay Ninh Province in search of elements of the 9th Viet Cong Division (Paras. 3-4). A two-company Communist force attacked a Regional Force outpost in Vinh Long Province, killing 31 South Vietnamese (Para. 5).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: There is nothing of significance to report.

III. North Vietnamese Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: A former AFP correspondent in Hanoi comments on his tour in the North Vietnamese capital (Paras. 1-4).

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VI. Other Major Aspects: Communists have started repairing the road network in Laos pan-handle (Paras. 1-4).



1. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Three US Army troop-carrying helicopters were shot down today by the Viet Cong in Tay Ninh Province. The three aircraft--each with a four-man crew and space for seven soldiers--were helilifting American soldiers to a new landing zone about 16 miles north of Tay Ninh city. Other helicopters in the area were also reportedly hit by enemy fire. American casualties have not been reported.

2. Two US Marine helicopters were shot down yesterday by enemy ground fire in the rice paddies 16 miles southwest of Da Nang in Quang Nam Province. Three Americans were killed and two wounded as a result of the incident. These five helicopter losses brought the toll of such aircraft in South Vietnam to 223.

3. Although no significant contact has been reported between allied and Communist forces in central Tay Ninh Province in the past eight days, elements of the 19-battalion Operation ATTLEBORO are still sweeping the area north of Tay Ninh city in search of Communist forces. Allied troops continue to locate caches of arms, ammunition, and other supplies which indicate this area was a major Communist logistical base. Known enemy losses now total 945 killed, with 3,000,000 pounds of rice captured as well as large amounts of ammunition, grenades, and weapons.

4. Communist units that have been in contact with allied forces in this operation have been identified as elements of all three regiments of the 9th Viet Cong Division and the three battalions of the North Vietnamese Army 101st Regiment. There have been no recent indications of the movement of additional enemy units toward this area of Tay Ninh Province.

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5. An enemy force, estimated to be two companies, attacked a South Vietnamese Regional Force (RF) outpost 28 miles southwest of Saigon in Vinh Long Province early today. A total of 15 RF troops and 16 civilians were killed and 13 RF and five civilians were wounded. A South Vietnamese Army reaction force moving to assist the outpost struck a mine, resulting in 14 killed and nine wounded. Enemy losses are unknown.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Former AFP correspondent in Hanoi Jean Raffaeli briefed press representatives in Geneva on 13 November on his impressions of North Vietnam after a five-month tour there. Raffaeli's reporting while in Hanoi was uneven in quality and occasionally self-contradictory, but he did apparently have good contacts with the Soviet mission in Hanoi and was frequently used to air developments in the Sino-Soviet dispute, which the Soviets wanted to publicize.

2. Raffaeli told fellow reporters in Geneva that President Ho Chi Minh is "old, tired, and slightly senile" and that the party was being run by Pham Van Dong and Le Duan as co-equals. Other foreigners, however, who have recently met with Ho describe him as alert and in good health. Raffaeli claimed that the party was completely united in its determination to continue the war in the South and gave the usual Soviet line on Hanoi's real intentions on a peaceful settlement--that is, the Vietnamese leaders are more reasonable than their propaganda statements would indicate and that it is up to the US to demonstrate the sincerity of its interest in a peaceful solution by stopping the bombings.

3. Raffaeli claimed that the North Vietnamese leadership is "privately very embarrassed" by China's cultural revolution but is determined to keep China as a friend and ally. Hanoi, for example, will refuse to join any bloc movement to condemn the Chinese. Raffaeli reported that in Hanoi both the Soviets and the Chinese submerge their differences, at least outwardly, at Hanoi's insistence. He claimed that each country has about 200 nonmilitary advisers in North Vietnam,

[REDACTED]

4. Raffaeli also commented on rumors which he had heard about American POWs. He estimated that there were between 200 and 260 prisoners, incarcerated in groups of ten in well-dispersed secret locations--

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a precaution against any attempt by the US to liberate them. The total figure is close to the US estimate of airmen missing and captured over North Vietnam. He claimed that the proposed trial of the prisoners was a Chinese idea which the Vietnamese supported for "political reasons;" in Raffaeli's opinion, however, the Vietnamese had no intention of either trying the airmen or executing them.

Morale in the DRV

5. Evidence continues to suggest that the North Vietnamese people are actively supporting the regime, bearing their difficulties quietly, and directing their resentment and anger against the US. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] the common danger and need for sacrifice brought about by the war have inspired the people to join together to carry out the dictates of the regime. [REDACTED] while this unity of action was in part spontaneous, it was forced to some extent by the vise-like control which the government exercises.

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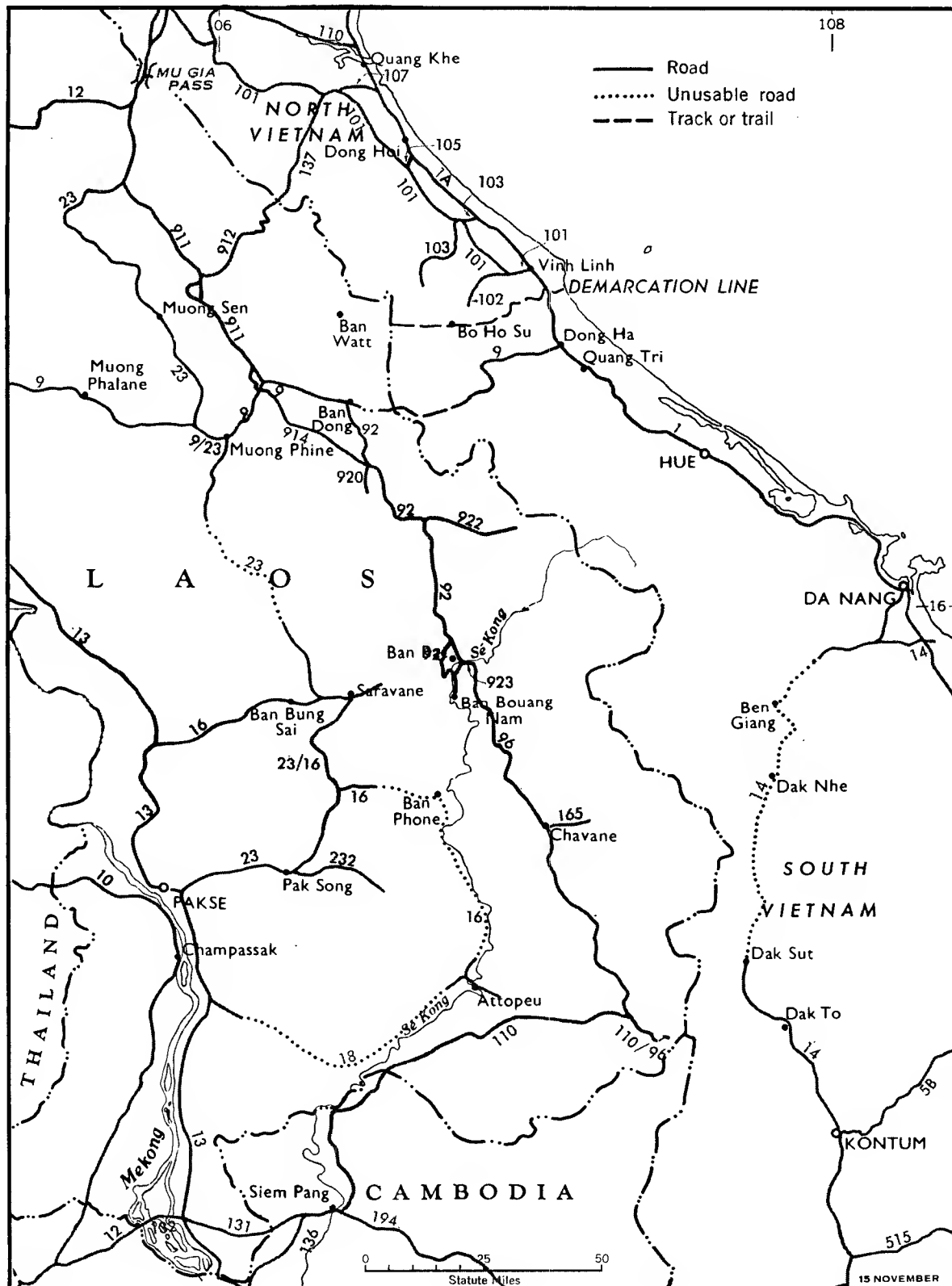
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LAOS PANHANDLE



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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. Road repair throughout the Laos panhandle road network appears to be under way. This work suggests that the Communists intend to use the network to supply the war effort in South Vietnam even though the resumption of truck traffic this dry season appears to be somewhat later than in 1965.

[redacted] early November, repairs were under way over long segments of roads in the central and southern portions of the panhandle. Some of the work was being performed by heavy equipment [redacted]

[redacted] Earlier information had indicated that roads in the northern part of the panhandle were already motorable except for the southern half of Route 911, which was being repaired.

3. Truck traffic into the panhandle from North Vietnam temporarily resumed in late September, when the rainy season in Laos nominally ended. A daily average of over a dozen trucks a day was reported traveling through the Mu Gia Pass area until mid-October, when the traffic fell off to a trickle. The condition of the roads in the southern half of the panhandle as of early November indicates that no through truck traffic to the South Vietnamese border could have taken place much below the DMZ area.

4. The major reason for the delay in the resumption of truck traffic was probably extensive weather damage to the road network during the rainy season. Bomb damage also contributed to Communist difficulties. Most of the panhandle roads were built hastily beginning in late 1965, and although this provided the Communists with useable roads quickly, the failure to use high construction standards increased the necessity of repair after the rainy season. During the rainy season (which ended in late September) the network was closed to traffic except for Route 12 through Mu Gia Pass and Route 912--the two roads from North Vietnam--and portions of Route 911.

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